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AUTHOR	Clark, Jane E.; Clements, Rhonda L.; Guddemi, Marci; Morgan, Don W.; Pica, Rae; Pivarnik, James M.; Rudisill, Mary; Small, Eric; Virgilio, Stephen J.
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ABSTRACT

Noting that infants should be encouraged to be physically active from the beginning of life to enhance physical and cognitive development, this statement provides teachers, parents, caregivers, and health care professionals with guidelines that address the kinds of activities, the environment, and the individuals responsible for facilitating very young children's physical activity. Following an introduction and overview, the statement provides five guidelines for each age group: infants (birth to 12 months), toddlers (12 to 36 months), and preschoolers (3 to 5 years). Each guideline addresses the "what," "where," and "who" of physical activity. Following the guidelines, the statement answers frequently asked questions. A glossary and chart of common motor behaviors, by age, conclude the statement. (Contains 40 references and lists recommended resources and related Web sites.) (HTH)

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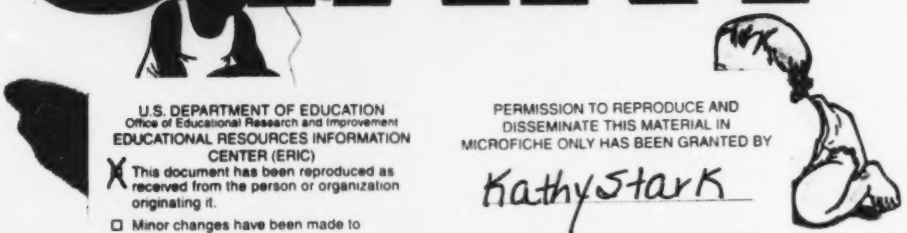

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A Statement of Physical Activity Guidelines for Children Birth to Five Years

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of the

National Association for Sport and Physical Education

an association of the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance

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ACTIVE START

A Statement of Physical Activity Guidelines for Children Birth to Five Years

National Association for Sport and Physical Education
an association of the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance
1900 Association Drive, Reston, VA 20191
www.aahperd.org/naspe • naspe@aahperd.org • (703) 476-3410

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Preface

This document has been prepared to complement other national consensus documents addressing physical activity recommendations for children 5 - 12 years, adolescents, and adults. The recommendations in this document provide guidance to parents, caregivers, and teachers of infants and young children about the physical activity capabilities and needs of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. Providing opportunities for movement and consistent encouragement to explore all kinds of movement is an important support for learning and healthy development for children at the earliest stages of life. The NASPE Cabinet acknowledges the expertise and personal commitment of the members of the Task Force who reviewed existing literature and drafted the recommendations contained in this report. It is hoped that the recommendations will facilitate the efforts of adults who interact with infants, toddlers, and/or preschoolers to establish healthy patterns of physical activity, motor skill acquisition, and exploration of the physical environment. These experiences can in turn appropriately enhance the overall physical, mental and social development of all children.

Acknowledgments

Appreciation is extended to the members of the Active Start Committee for contributing their time and effort to developing and writing this document:

Jane E. Clark, Chair
Rhonda L. Clements
Marci Guddemi
Don W. Morgan
Rae Pica
James M. Pivarnik
Mary Rudisill
Eric Small
Stephen J. Virgilio

NASPE'S POSITION

All children birth to age five should engage in daily physical activity that promotes health-related fitness and movement skills.

With ***Active Start: A Statement of Physical Activity Guidelines for Children Birth to Five Years,*** the National Association for Sport and Physical Education takes a position on the importance of physical activity for children birth to five years of age. This document contains guidelines and information for teachers, parents, caregivers, and health-care professionals who are interested in promoting physical activity in infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.

Introduction

Young children are not miniature adults and have very specific needs relative to weight control and physical activity.

In the last decade, the relationship between physical activity and health in adults and older children has been highlighted by the National Institutes of Health, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the American College of Sports Medicine, and the National Association for Sport and Physical Education. These organizations, however, did not specifically address the importance of physical activity for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. The following is the position of the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE):

All children birth to age five should engage in daily physical activity that promotes health-related fitness and movement skills.

This position and the accompanying guidelines emerged in light of recent evidence suggesting that daily physical activity declines as children age. This reduction in physical activity has been tied to increasing levels of obesity in childhood. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have warned that obesity is on the rise in preschool children. Obese children tend to become obese adults. Moreover, studies have demonstrated that the first signs of atherosclerosis appear in the first years of life.

In considering how physical activity might lower the prevalence of obesity and diminish the occurrence of coronary risk factors in youth, it is important to note that young children are not miniature adults and have very specific needs relative to weight control and physical activity. The intensity, duration, frequency, and mode of physical activity typically prescribed for adults are not appropriate for young children. Specific guidelines for the physical activity of children birth to five years of age are needed to address the unique characteristics and needs of the developing child.

The health benefits of physical activity are well known. A sedentary lifestyle has been linked to the development of coronary heart disease, diabetes mellitus, obesity, and other chronic ailments. Sedentary habits among adults are a major health problem in the United States, with an estimated 250,000 deaths a year due to low levels of physical activity and fitness, placing sedentary living in the same risk category as cigarette smoking and driving while intoxicated. The 1996 *Surgeon General's Report on Physical Activity and Health* and *Healthy People 2010* stresses the importance of regular participation in physical activity. It is also recognized that the foundation for a

lifetime of physical activity begins in childhood. Although little research exists suggesting that physical activity patterns of young children track into adulthood, it is known that activity decreases with age and that youth who are physically inactive tend to become sedentary as adults. In fact, research has demonstrated that very few adults who were physically inactive as children become active as adults.

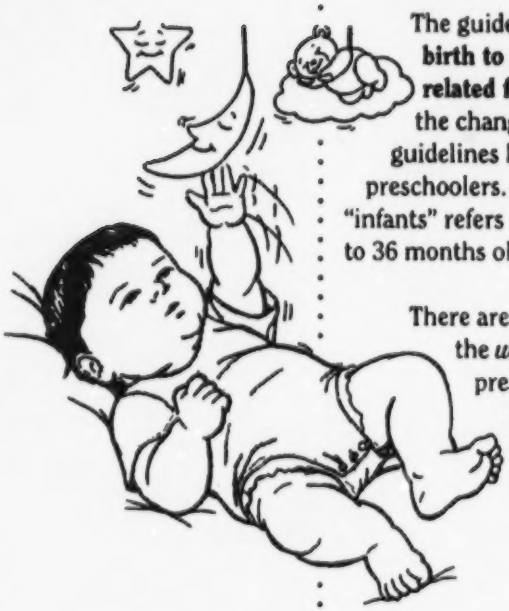
Adopting a physically active lifestyle early in life increases the likelihood that infants and young children will learn to move skillfully. Early motor skills form the foundation for later sport, dance, and exercise activities. Promoting and fostering enjoyment of movement and motor skill confidence and competence at an early age will help to ensure later participation in physical activity. In addition, current research confirms that the physical activity of infants and young children is an important component of early brain development and learning.

Current research confirms that the physical activity of infants and young children is an important component of early brain development and learning.

Although these guidelines focus on physical activity, we recognize that nutritional behaviors are also an important component of children's health. In order to meet increased physical activity demands, children need a wide variety of nutrients with a greater concentration of foods of high nutrient density. Foods that supply few nutrients other than energy should be minimized in the diet. Parents and caretakers should expose children to a wide variety of foods of high nutritional quality.

Overview

The position statement and guidelines found in this document reflect the best thinking of motor development, movement, and exercise physiology specialists about the physical activity needs of young children during the first years of life. Published research was reviewed and experts consulted. Whenever possible, the guidelines were based directly on research. However, due to the lack of research data on physical activity for this age group, some guidelines were founded on theories and principles of infant and child development, as well as those theories, principles, and acceptable practices for physical activity.



The guidelines that follow are in support of NASPE's position that **all children birth to age five should engage in daily physical activity that promotes health-related fitness and movement skills.** For ease of understanding, and because of the changing developmental needs of children from birth to age five, the guidelines have been divided into three categories: infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. In keeping with the terminology used in early childhood education, "infants" refers to children from birth to 12 months of age; "toddlers" are children 12 to 36 months old; and "preschoolers" are children ages three to five years.

There are five guidelines for each of these age groups. Each guideline addresses the *what*, *where*, and *who* of physical activity for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. Thus, these guidelines are intended to answer questions relative to the *kind* of physical activity for infants and young children, the *environment* for the physical activity, and the *individuals* responsible for facilitating the physical activity.

Guidelines

Infants

Guideline 1. **Infants should interact with parents and/or caregivers in daily physical activities that are dedicated to promoting the exploration of their environment.**

Guideline 2. **Infants should be placed in safe settings that facilitate physical activity and do not restrict movement for prolonged periods of time.**

Guideline 3. **Infants' physical activity should promote the development of movement skills.**

Although infants are born with a collection of reflexes that ensure their immediate survival, they quickly learn to move and manage their bodies in an ever-changing world. During the first months of life, infants develop a number of movement capabilities that allow them to explore and interact with their surroundings. Appropriate physical activity provides a unique and important opportunity to foster an infant's developing movement skills. Practicing and refining movements helps the infant gain control over body movements and provides the basis for developing more skillful motor performance in the toddler and preschool years. Infancy is a critical time for the development of brain-muscle connections. Research has shown that stimulating experiences in which the infant is an active participant positively affect brain development.

Positive early movement experiences increase the infant's chances of achieving full developmental potential throughout life.

To become a skillful mover later in life, infants need to master a wide range of basic movements such as sitting, standing, and walking. In addition, positive early movement experiences increase the infant's chances of achieving full developmental potential throughout life. Although it may appear that sitting up, rolling over, and crawling emerge naturally, these behaviors are clearly influenced by the parent and/or caregiver and the environmental stimulation available to the infant. For example, an infant who is confined to a small play space or spends most of the day in an infant seat may be delayed in rolling over, sitting, crawling, and walking. Parents and/or caregivers must ensure that infants are given opportunities to move and should encourage the development of gross and fine movement skills.

Part of the infant's day should be spent with a caregiver or parent who provides opportunities for planned or structured physical activity. These experiences should incorporate a variety of baby games such as peekaboo and pat-a-cake, and sessions in which the child is held, rocked, and carried to new environments. Whenever possible,

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the child should be placed on his or her stomach and encouraged to move about actively on a clean or blanketed floor. For example, infants can be encouraged to move by placing a rattle or favorite toy just out of their reach. The caregiver/parent, however, should change the object's position to ensure success at the task.

The parent and/or caregiver should take every opportunity to interact with the infant as long as he or she is attentive to playful activity.

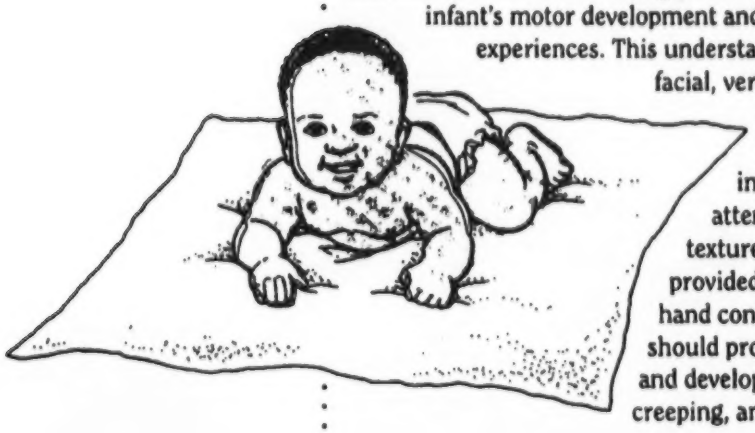
Physical activity experiences for infants should incorporate a variety of play objects that have pieces that cannot be swallowed, are lightweight for handling and grasping, have no sharp points or edges, and are brightly colored, varying in textures, and nontoxic. Large blocks, stacking toys, nesting cups, textured balls, squeeze toys, and crib gyms encourage the child to reach, grasp, and hold. They also awaken the infant's senses.

Guideline 4. Infants should have an environment that meets or exceeds recommended safety standards for performing large muscle activities.

Safety should be a major consideration when planning the physical environment for infants. The parent and/or caregiver should closely supervise the infant's physical activity to ensure a safe and positive movement experience. A wide variety of age-appropriate and developmentally appropriate equipment that promotes motor skill acquisition should be available. To ensure maximum movement opportunities, the infant requires a minimum of a 5' x 7' rug or blanket for playing, rolling, and other large muscle activities.

Guideline 5. Individuals responsible for the well-being of infants should be aware of the importance of physical activity and facilitate the child's movement skills.

Informed parents and/or caregivers are aware of the milestones that are part of the infant's motor development and appreciate the infant's need for physical experiences. This understanding leads the parent and/or caregiver to use facial, verbal, and nonverbal expressions to motivate the child's physical participation. The parent and/or caregiver should take every opportunity to interact with the infant as long as he or she is attentive to playful activity. Safe objects of different textures, sizes, colors, shapes, and weights should be provided to allow the infant to practice grasping and hand control. In addition, the parent and/or caregiver should provide an open environment for the exploration and development of rolling over, sitting up, crawling, creeping, and standing.



Toddlers

Guideline 1. **Toddlers should accumulate at least 30 minutes daily of structured physical activity.**

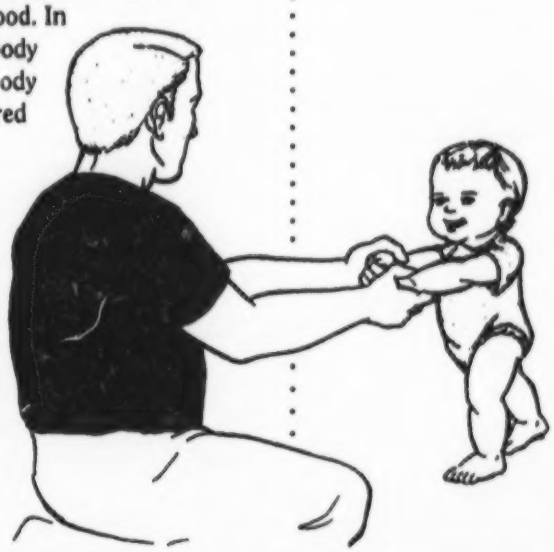
Guideline 2. **Toddlers should engage in at least 60 minutes and up to several hours per day of daily, unstructured physical activity and should not be sedentary for more than 60 minutes at a time except when sleeping.**

Guideline 3. **Toddlers should develop movement skills that are building blocks for more complex movement tasks.**

With increased opportunity for exploration and learning, basic movement skills such as running, jumping, throwing, and kicking will develop.

Once a child is walking, the hands-free upright posture opens a new world of movement possibilities. With this increased opportunity for exploration and learning, basic movement skills such as running, jumping, throwing, and kicking will develop. These skills do not appear just because a child grows older, but emerge from an interaction between hereditary potential and movement experiences. Although it may look to a toddler's parent and/or caregiver that running, throwing, and jumping are natural movements, these behaviors are clearly influenced by the environment. For example, a child who does not have access to stairs may be delayed in stair climbing. Similarly, a child who is discouraged from bouncing and chasing balls may lag in hand-eye coordination.

Basic movement skills such as walking, running, jumping, and fundamental motor skills such as throwing, catching, kicking, and striking objects should be emphasized when age- and developmentally appropriate, since they are prerequisites for more complex movements performed during childhood and adulthood. In addition, activities that encourage children to support some body weight with their hands are recommended to develop upper-body strength. These activities should be practiced in both structured and unstructured settings.



Common objects for structured physical activity sessions should include child-size equipment and musical instruments, as well as rhythmical tapes with active follow-along songs and basic rhythms. Toddlers can also increase their physical activity level by acting out imaginative poems and participating in simple body awareness and chase games. Physical activities of this nature are intended to enhance movement skill ability and increase understanding of how to move and play with an adult or small group of children. Additionally, they foster development of creative and expressive abilities.

Unstructured physical activity experiences for toddlers should provide opportunities for the child to experiment and discover different physical environments, move and physically play alongside peers, and imitate adult roles and actions. Common unstructured physical activity experiences include crawling under and around playground structures, grasping large balls and inflatable toys, digging and building in sandboxes, and being physically active with peers in an adult-supervised wading pool. The parent and/or caregiver should also supply an ample number of objects for the child to ride, push, pull, balance on, climb up, and jump safely down from to ground level. Regular exposure to these physical activities enables the young child to gain knowledge needed to deal with and master the physical environment as well as promote the development of strength, balance, flexibility, and cardiovascular endurance.

The parents and/or caregivers ... should encourage physical activities that foster creativity and imagination.

Guideline 4. Toddlers should have indoor and outdoor areas that meet or exceed recommended safety standards for performing large muscle activities.

The environment plays a significant role in the physical activity behaviors of toddlers. A minimum of 50 square feet of accessible outdoor play space is required. The entire room or play area should be childproofed, accessible, and friendly for children with disabilities. A minimum space of 5' x 7' should be designated per child for active movement.

Guideline 5. Individuals responsible for the well-being of toddlers should be aware of the importance of physical activity and facilitate the child's movement skills.

Informed parents and/or caregivers are familiar with the toddler's developmental milestones and structure the learning environment for increased physical activity. They help the child safely explore the world by setting appropriate boundaries within the child's physical capabilities. The parents and/or caregivers recognize the toddler's desire to imitate adult actions, but they also encourage physical activities that foster creativity and imagination. Because toddlers learn best through activity, knowledgeable parents and/or caregivers encourage children to repeat and expand upon previous learning. Parents and/or caregivers also recognize that toddlers seldom engage in activities unless there is continuing interest and subsequent knowledge to be gained. Encouragement should be provided when needed. Continuing interest in physical activity is enhanced through planned sessions involving child-sized equipment and toys that facilitate multiple movement possibilities.

Preschoolers

Guideline 1. **Preschoolers should accumulate at least 60 minutes daily of structured physical activity.**

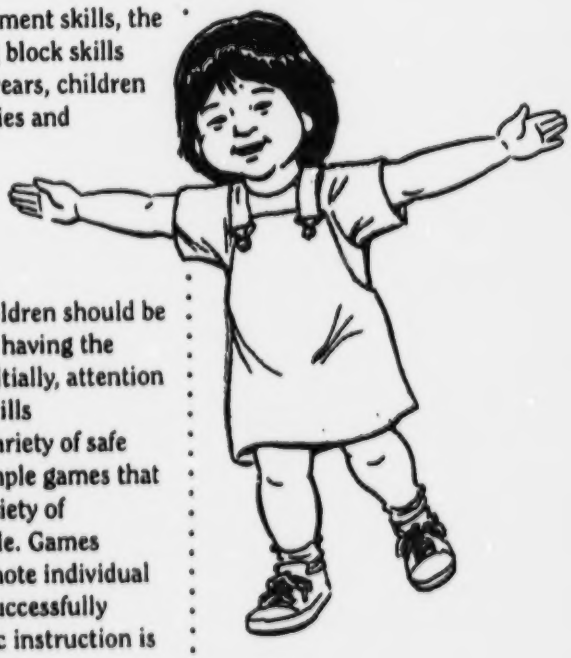
Guideline 2. **Preschoolers should engage in at least 60 minutes and up to several hours of daily, unstructured physical activity and should not be sedentary for more than 60 minutes at a time except when sleeping.**

Guideline 3. **Preschoolers should develop competence in movement skills that are building blocks for more complex movement tasks.**

These guidelines recognize that preschoolers are naturally active, gravitate toward physical activities that are enjoyable, and require time to learn and refine basic motor skills. The precise duration, frequency, and intensity of movement and physical activity will depend on a child's age, developmental status, ability level, personal interest, prior physical activity experience, and normal tendency to alternate short bursts of activity with intervals of rest or recovery. Consequently, physical activity can occur for several seconds to several minutes at a time. If enough individual bouts of physical activity involving large muscle groups result in energy being expended for 60 minutes or longer, the resulting daily caloric output may help prevent or mitigate excessive weight gain, a condition that has become more prevalent in children and adolescents.

Instruction and positive reinforcement is critical during this time in order to ensure that children develop most of these skills before entering school.

Whereas the toddler period is a time for learning a wide variety of movement skills, the preschool years offer opportunities for refining and combining building block skills that will lead to more complex movement tasks. During the preschool years, children should be encouraged to practice movement skills in a variety of activities and settings. Instruction and positive reinforcement is critical during this time in order to ensure that children develop most of these skills before entering school. If these fundamental skills are not acquired, the preschooler's full movement potential may not be realized.



Structured physical activity experiences for three- and four-year-old children should be aimed at introducing a variety of different movement skills rather than having the child achieve a high level of movement competence in any one skill. Initially, attention should be directed at having the child explore a variety of movement skills individually, then with a partner, and finally in a small group. A large variety of safe objects should be offered for the child to roll, kick, throw, or catch. Simple games that encourage children to use their imagination while demonstrating a variety of locomotor, nonlocomotor, and manipulative skills are also very desirable. Games selected for young children should be noncompetitive and should promote individual skill development. Balance stunts and simple tumbling activities can successfully increase the child's strength and body management. Supervised aquatic instruction is

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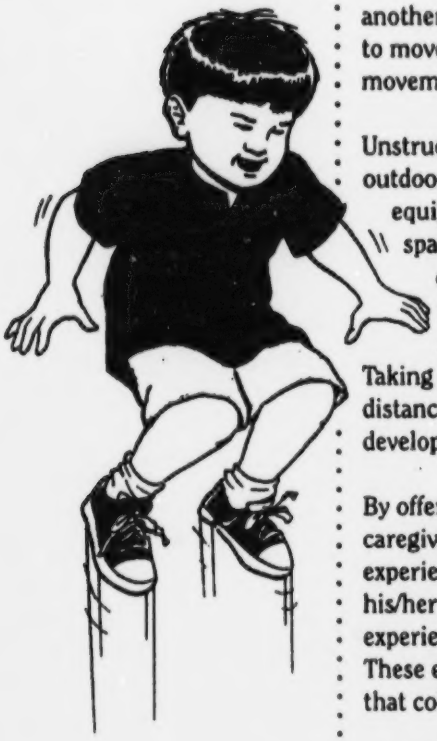

another structured physical activity that is appropriate to the child's ability and need to move vigorously. The child should also have opportunities to practice a variety of movement skills to the beat of music.

Unstructured physical activity experiences should encourage the child to explore large outdoor toys and equipment, including wheeled vehicles and preschool playground equipment. Opportunities for climbing, balancing, swinging, hanging, and sliding spark a child's interest and increase his/her love for physical challenges. Other desirable activities include moving on different surfaces of varying heights that test the child's physical ability in a safe environment, and playing in outdoor settings that provide natural shrubbery to move vigorously around or through. Taking preschoolers on walks around local environments, varying the pace and distance, may enhance fitness while also providing opportunities for locomotor skill development and expanded spatial and cognitive learning.

By offering structured physical activity experiences to preschoolers, the parent and/or caregiver helps extend the young child's awareness of the body's capabilities. These experiences are directed generally toward promoting the child's movement skill and his/her ability to interact socially with parents or peers. Unstructured physical activity experiences provide opportunities for child-initiated movement and physical play. These experiences involve both indoor and outdoor settings and the use of equipment that coincides with the young child's interest and physical ability.

Guideline 4. Preschoolers should have indoor and outdoor areas that meet or exceed recommended safety standards for performing large muscle activities.

Space and materials for preschoolers should provide opportunities for child-initiated and adult-supervised physical activity. The learning environment should allow for creative play areas where a child molds, shapes, changes, builds, and reconstructs his/her surroundings through physical activity and play. For the preschooler, a minimum of 75 square feet of accessible outdoor play space is required for each child (Caring for Our Children National Health and Performance Standards, American Public Health Association and American Academy of Pediatrics, 1992). With respect to indoor space, the entire room or area should be childproofed, and a space of at least 5' x 7' for each child should be designated for structured movement and activities. Additional space should be provided for the child to engage in more advanced motor skills such as running, skipping, and hopping.

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Guideline 5. Individuals responsible for the well-being of preschoolers should be aware of the importance of physical activity and facilitate the child's movement skills.

Knowledgeable parents and/or caregivers value physical activity and place emphasis on expanding the young child's movement skills repertoire. The preschooler's desire to move vigorously is the first step toward increased physical activity. The informed parent and/or caregiver acknowledge the preschooler's developmental milestones and need for peer interaction in movement environments. Efforts should be made to initiate small-group activities that are cooperative and noncompetitive in nature. The extent to which family members, parents, and/or caregivers serve as role models and are physically active can influence the child's urge to move and explore her or his surroundings. In addition, research suggests that parent involvement plays a significant role in successful preschool interventions. It is reasonable to assume that parents and/or caregivers who appreciate the importance of movement and physical activity are better able to facilitate movement experiences for their children and are more likely to detect developmental delays in the young child.

The extent to which family members, parents, and/or caregivers serve as role models and are physically active can influence the child's urge to move and explore her or his surroundings.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. My infant is only a few months old. Should I wait until she is older before I encourage her to be physically active?

Encourage your infant to be active ***from the start*** of life. Infants will signal their distress if you push them beyond their capabilities. To promote your infant's motor development, offer a small challenge just outside her ability and see how she reacts. For example, place a toy just out of her reach. Move the toy closer or farther to encourage her to reach.

Physical activity should be a part of the child's daily life—not something he/she is required to do.

2. How do I know if my child is participating in appropriate physical activities?

Physical activity should be a daily part of your infant or child's life. Involve both the large and small muscle groups of the body, and be sure the activity is enjoyable and success building. Remember to be sensitive to your child's disinterest or distress. These may signal that the activity is too stressful. Start with an easy activity and progress to more challenging activities.

3. Should I force a child to become physically active if he or she is not motivated?

Avoid forcing a child to "exercise" or using exercise as a means of punishment. Physical activity should be a part of the child's daily life—not something he/she is required to do. Several strategies may encourage the child to play more actively. For infants, finding the "right" time for physical activity play is critical. Encourage the infant to move and explore his/her environment when he/she is active and alert. If the child is fussy or sleepy, discontinue the interactive movement activities until the child shows interest. Another strategy to increase the infant's motivation to move is to provide developmentally appropriate activities, objects, and environments that are novel, stimulating, and provide clear goals for the infants. Interaction between the parent and/or caregiver and infant during physical activity play will also increase the likelihood that the infant will engage in active play for longer periods of time.

For toddlers and preschoolers, one of the most important factors in motivating the child is to encourage movement through modeling or example. The parent and/or caregiver should demonstrate how to move, an interest in learning to move, and expressions of pleasure when engaging in physical activity. Often, parents and/or caregivers do not participate with children when they are engaged in physical activity play but instead become onlookers who sit and watch children play. This should be avoided. During movement time, the parent and/or caregiver and children should be engaged in movement activities, with the parent and/or caregiver providing positive demonstrations and examples for the children.

4. Do children "naturally" learn the fundamental motor skills?

Many people feel that fundamental motor skills "just develop" as children get older. This is not true. Acquiring motor skills requires experience, encouragement, and, often, instruction. In fact, whereas it is common for parents to teach the alphabet and counting to their child during the early childhood years, rarely do you see parents making the same commitment to teach their child fundamental motor skills. Certain skills like walking and running seem to emerge in a more natural fashion than jumping, hopping, galloping, sliding, catching, throwing, bouncing, kicking, and striking. In fact, research suggests that children may perform a skill to a certain level of proficiency but never acquire an advanced level without instruction, practice, and encouragement. In other words, children need instruction, practice, and encouragement to learn the basic skills for sport and lifetime movement activities.

5. What if my child is much more active than you recommend?

The recommendation for young children to accumulate at least one hour of daily structured physical activity should be viewed as a minimal requirement. Given the fact that young children are naturally active and are learning to become proficient in a variety of motor skills, engaging in physical activity for longer time periods is encouraged.

6. What is the difference between moderate and vigorous physical activity?

Moderate physical activity is sustained easily for a lengthy time period, whereas vigorous physical activity produces fatigue in a relatively short period of time. Most young children will likely combine moderate and vigorous physical activity in an intermittent fashion.

7. Does it matter what time of day my child performs physical activity?

Given the sporadic physical activity patterns of young children, they will probably be active throughout the day. The time of day is not critical. What is important is the accumulation, or adding up, of many episodes of physical activity on a daily basis.

8. Should the parent and/or caregiver participate in the movement activities?

The parent and/or caregiver is a role model for physical activity. If your children see you as physically active, they will see this as *normal*. When parents and/or caregivers are providing instruction using a direct approach (e.g., the demonstration of a physical skill), they should join in. When facilitating activities that encourage the child to explore, the parent and/or caregiver should refrain from participation in order to avoid imitation by the children. For example, when preschoolers are asked to demonstrate crooked shapes, the children may respond with a wide variety of shapes.

Research suggests that children may perform a skill to a certain level of proficiency but never acquire an advanced level without instruction, practice, and encouragement.

9. How many children should the parent and/or caregiver work with at a time?

In determining group size, considerations should include the availability of space and equipment, the activity that is planned, and the abilities of the children. For preschool children ages 4-5, the National Association for the Education of Young Children suggests that one adult should be present for every ten children (Bredekamp, 1997).

10. What is meant by the term "practice" in early childhood physical activity programs?

Practice for a child is "fun." Repeating a movement is inherently joyful for the child. Be sure to encourage variability in the child's practice by varying the amount of force used, the speed of action, and the different directions, pathways, and levels of action.

11. Are there appropriate ways to manage groups of children during physical activity sessions?

Success-oriented programs are likely to have fewer behavioral problems. Children who experience success are less likely to stray from the parent and/or caregiver's directions. Providing adequate space and equipment should also help keep children on task. Simple rules and suggestions for physical activity participation should be provided to each child. For example, there should be a clear "stop" signal such as "freeze."

12. What does the nonprofessional need to know in order to provide the essential components involved in planning and directing a physical activity session?

At the very least, individuals responsible for the well-being of young children should know the expectations and physical activity needs of children at each age and developmental level. They must be able to provide a safe and developmentally appropriate environment that is stimulating to the children.

13. What kind of person is effective in facilitating the young child's physical activity experiences?

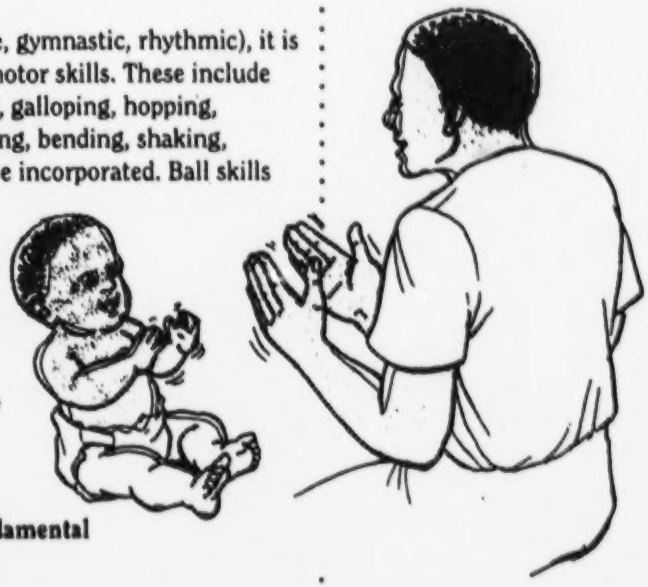
Parents know their child's detailed history and the ways she or he reacts to new situations. They can provide a secure atmosphere for the learning of movement skills. Parents and/or caregivers can effectively structure the environment and the child's schedule to offer daily opportunities for physical activity. Both parents and professionals can demonstrate an appreciation for physical activity by role modeling and projecting enthusiasm.

14. Are resources available to aid in the planning and implementation of early childhood activity?

In the past decade, a great number of teacher resources have been published that assist parents and/or caregivers in offering young children appropriate physical activity experiences. The majority of these resources emphasize creative movement and motor skill challenges that serve as the foundation for the child's increased physical activity.

15. What should be the content of a movement program for preschoolers?

Regardless of the kinds of skills planned (e.g., manipulative, gymnastic, rhythmic), it is important that young children first acquire fundamental motor skills. These include the locomotor skills of walking, running, jumping, leaping, galloping, hopping, sliding, and skipping. Nonlocomotor skills such as stretching, bending, shaking, turning, rocking, swaying, swinging, and twisting should be incorporated. Ball skills such as throwing, catching, striking and kicking should also be included. Young children should also become familiar with the movement concepts of time, space, and force, which allow them to practice and develop skills at a variety of speeds, in different directions, at different levels, along different pathways, and with different degrees of muscle tension. Activities should also challenge, but not to excess, the children's physical fitness capabilities (e.g., strength, flexibility, cardiovascular endurance).



16. What happens if a child fails to master the fundamental motor skills?

Fundamental motor skills are the basis for sports and lifetime movement activities. In other words, if a child does not learn a particular skill well enough to apply it to sports and lifetime activities, then he or she may avoid participating in that activity in the future. For example, many adults avoid joining their friends in line dancing, ice-skating, or other physical activities for which they do not have sufficient foundational skills. Children should first learn fundamental motor skills through guided exploration and play activities before attempting to perform them in simple games and more complex sport skills.

17. Will my child be more intelligent if she is physically active?

New brain research shows that young children need a substantial amount of physical activity to meet their developmental needs. Scientists now believe that for infants and young children to achieve their maximum potential, their activities and environments need to be stimulating to their brains. Genetics plays an important role in determining

the basic circuits in the brain, but what the infant experiences has a strong influence on the trillions of brain connections that develop after birth. For example, research has shown that intensive early education using such objects as blocks and beads and playing a variety of games has a long-term positive effect on IQ and academic achievement. Physical activity is obviously important for a child's physical development, but scientists now realize that it also contributes to the child's brain development as well.

18. Should I enroll my 3- or 4-year-old in an organized sport program?

Organized sport programs are appropriate for children who have the fundamental skills required for the particular sport. By the time children are six years old, they are generally able to execute these fundamental skills. Typically, preschool children have not had enough practice, experience, or instruction to perform these skills at a level sufficient for successful participation. Participation in an organized sport may develop motor skills, but not if the skill level of the child does not match what is required in the program. In addition, preschoolers do not have the cognitive and social development to benefit from such experiences. Being on a "team" is a difficult concept for a preschooler. Playing in an organized sport program too early in life may result in frustration and loss of interest in sport. Look for programs for preschoolers that stress learning the fundamental motor skills, not ones that focus on sports.

19. Will restricting television watching and video game playing help promote physical activity in my child?

When children watch television and play video games, physical activity is minimal. Spending hours watching television has been linked to greater body weight and body fat in children. Being active from the start means getting toddlers and preschoolers to be physically active and not "hooked" on television as their major form of entertainment.

Glossary

Developmentally appropriate refers to the suitability of the activity, equipment, or instruction for the present performance or ability level of the infant, toddler, or preschooler.

Exercise is planned, structured, and repetitive physical activity that is designed to improve and maintain physical fitness.

Fine motor skills are those actions that require control of the small muscles of the body to achieve skillfulness. Examples include drawing, cutting with scissors, handwriting, and playing a musical instrument.

Fundamental motor skills are the foundational skills that provide the building blocks for specific movements such as those found in sport, games, and dance. Examples of fundamental motor skills are jumping, hopping, throwing, kicking, and running.

Gross motor skills are those actions that use the large muscles of the body to achieve skillfulness. Examples include walking, jumping, skipping, and throwing.

Health-related fitness refers to those components of physical fitness that are related in a positive manner to health and well-being. These components include cardiovascular fitness, body composition, flexibility, and muscular endurance and strength.

Infancy refers to the period from birth to 18 months of age.

Locomotor skills are movements that transport an individual from one place to another. Examples include rolling, walking, running, jumping, hopping, galloping, and skipping.

Manipulative skills involve control of objects primarily with the hands or feet. Examples of these skills include throwing, catching, dribbling, kicking, and striking.

Moderate physical activity is easily maintained and is performed at an intensity in which heart rate and breathing are increased.

Motor skill refers to physical activity that is directed toward a specific function or goal.

Motor skillfulness occurs when the goal of the action is adaptively and efficiently achieved and with maximum likelihood of success.

Nonlocomotor skills are those activities where there is minimal or no movement of the body's base of support (i.e., the feet). These skills usually require the individual to maintain balance over the base while moving other parts of the body such as the trunk or arms. Examples include bending, swaying, and twisting.

Play is the means by which infants and young children physically explore their environment and increase their language, imagination, and creative thinking. Play can be vigorous, but it does not always involve movements that result in meaningful energy expenditure.

Physical activity is defined as any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that results in energy expenditure. For infants and very young toddlers, a more common way to describe young children's physical activity is the term "movement."

Physical fitness is a condition where the body is in a state of well-being and readily able to meet the physical challenges of everyday life. Most experts believe physical fitness is the result of practicing a physically active lifestyle. For young children, appropriate movement tasks and experiences can enhance overall body strength, bone density, and developmental functioning of the cardiovascular system.

Preschooler is the term used to describe a child who is three to five years of age.

Sedentary refers to a condition of physical inactivity.

Structured physical activity is planned and directed by the parent, caregiver, or teacher and is designed to accommodate the infant, toddler, or preschooler's developmental level.

Toddler refers to a child who is 12 months to three years of age.

Unstructured physical activity is child-initiated physical activity that occurs as the child explores his or her environment.

Vigorous physical activity can produce fatigue in a short period of time and is performed at an intensity in which heart rate and breathing are elevated to levels higher than those observed for moderate physical activity. Examples of vigorous physical activity include running, jumping rope, and biking.

Common Motor Behaviors By Age

Figure 1. Average age and age range of appearance of common motor behaviors during infancy.

Average Age	Age Range	Motor behavior
1.6 mos	0.7-4 mos	Head erect and steady
2.3 mos	1-5 mos	Prop sit (placed in position with support)
3.5 mos	2-4.5 mos	Lifts head, shoulders, full forearm in prone position
5.3 mos	4-8 mos	Sits alone momentarily
5.4 mos	4-8 mos	Unilateral reaching
6.4 mos	4-10 mos	Rolls over (back to front)
8.1 mos	5-12 mos	Crawls Pulls to stand
8.8 mos	6-12 mos	Cruises along furniture
11 mos	9-16 mos	Stands momentarily without support
11.7 mos	9-16 mos	Walks independently

Adapted from N. Bayley, *Manual for the Bayley Scales of Infant Development* (NY: The Psychological Corporation, 1969).

Figure 2. Average age and age range of appearance of common motor behaviors during the toddler and preschool years.

Average Age	Age Range	Motor Behavior
1.5 yr	1.3 – 1.8 yr	Run
2.0 yr	1.8 – 2.5 yr	Gallop Double jump
2.5 yr	2 – 3 yr.	Vertical jump
3.2 yr	3 – 4 yr	Stand on one foot (5 sec)
3.3 yr	3 – 4 yr	Standing long jump
3.4 yr	3 – 4 yr	Hop
4.5 yr	4 – 5 yr	Skip

Source: J.E. Clark & J. Whitall, "Changing Patterns of Locomotion: From Walking to Skipping," in *Development of Posture and Gait Across the Life Span*, edited by M.H. Woollacott & A Shumway-Cook (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1989).

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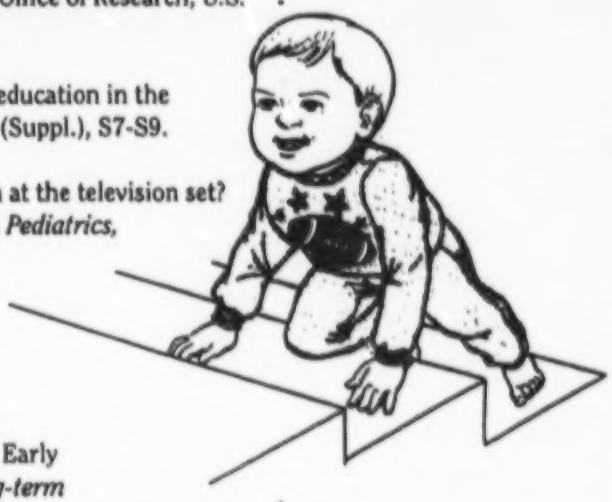

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http://www.aahperd.org/naspe/naspe_main.html

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Head Start
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Prenatal Development
http://www.visembryo.com

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American Association for the Child's Right to Play
http://www.ipausa.org

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Consumer Product Safety Commission Web Site for Kids and Kid Safety
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Motor behavior in Down Syndrome
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Society for Neuroscience
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Academy of Pediatrics
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National Program for Playground Safety
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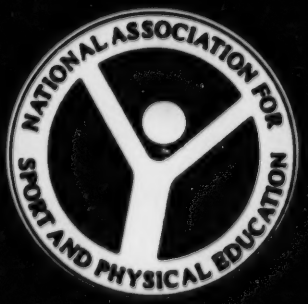

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